

IO During the Malayan Emergency

By James R. Bortree, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

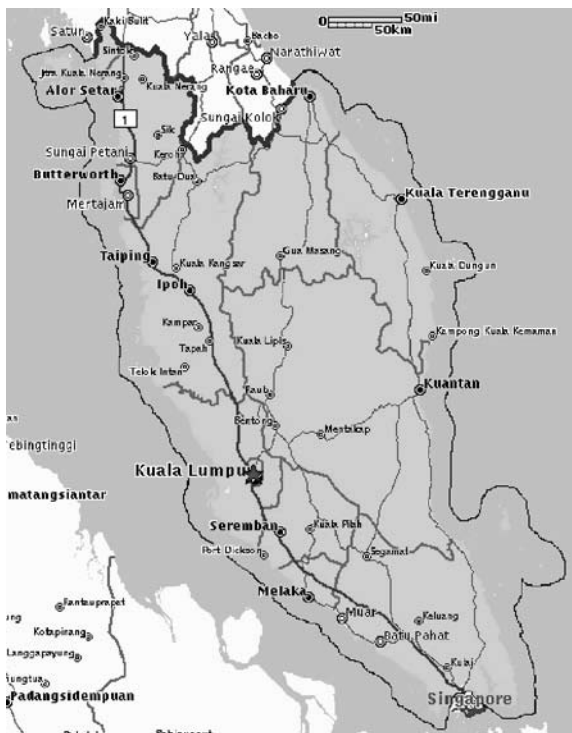
Editorial Abstract: Lt Col Bortree analyzes the major phases of British counterinsurgency actions in Malaya, describing use of IO core capabilities in an historical campaign context. He then contrasts British successes with the limitations of contemporary US doctrine, and how lessons learned are especially relevant to current Coalition actions in Southwest Asia.

Malaya is an example of a resource-limited government that defeats a well-equipped, experienced, and organized insurgent force. The United Kingdom (UK) and its successor, the Government of Malaya (GOM), successfully countered a large-scale insurgency and achieved independence, while showing how a multifaceted civil, military and information program provided an optimum counterinsurgency response. These combined programs did not happen overnight, but were an evolution of the UK and GOM learning and adapting based upon their successes and failures. Through trial and error, UK counterinsurgency efforts evolved from an initial campaign based on retribution, into one that focused on breaking the relationship between the insurgents and the population base.

To achieve this “hearts and minds approach,” Britain’s campaign blended control, information, political, economic, and social measures under a fully unified command structure. Effective use of local civil and police forces were crucial in minimizing the cost of the Emergency, which Malaya’s own tin and rubber export revenues paid. Most significantly, this campaign effectively demonstrates how an information campaign and civil measures can achieve popular support.

Initial Steps

The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) carried out anti-Japanese actions during World War II, and a protracted fight for Malayan independence beginning in 1948. Initial British evaluations of what they faced were both accurate and wrong. The British correctly assessed that the key industrial targets were the tin mines and rubber plantations of Malaya. At the same time, they correctly identified the unassimilated Chinese civilian population as the base from which the insurgents hoped to draw support. They realized that, in addition to recruits, the critical link would be the food and supplies that friendly Chinese (the Min Yuen) would supply to the insurgents. Initial estimates of the size of the insurgent force ranged from Britain’s



Malaya, circa 1952. (MOD Australia)

estimate of 2,000, up to 10,000 according to the Soviet Union—both of which were wrong. Post insurgency interviews and records found the actual number to be in excess of 12,000. This was coupled with an initial British effort characterized by Lt Gen Sir Harold Briggs—a major figure in the Emergency—as “inadequate, undermanned and under managed,” partly due to a lack of trained Chinese linguists. Further, the UK’s decision to completely change their civil and military administration hurt the Malayan people’s faith in government. MCP propaganda portrayed the change in administration as an indication of the insurgent’s success, and the loss of faith in the British Administration hampered early calls to the Chinese community for support. Worse, the scale of violence increased while the British

administration studied the problem. The most conclusive item resulting from this analysis was British realization that to win, Malaya had to become independent.

Electronic Warfare & Military Deception

Hoping to take advantage of technology, initial British attempts to locate and gather information on insurgent operations relied heavily upon communications intelligence (COMINT). However, enforcement of strict import controls on radios limited the MCP’s radio capability, and they mostly relied on couriers as their primary means of communication. Because of these two actions, two-way radios were limited to MCP elite, with no radios at the platoon and company level. Some receivers were available for listening to Radio Peking, but this lack of two-way radios was to limit the overall COMINT value.

Military Deception and propaganda were also limited, as administrators saw MILDEC and propaganda as possibly compromising the theme of an open and honest administration. The British and the MCP were fighting over the Malayan population and UK leaders reasoned that a strategic deception could have serious consequences on British credibility.

Consequently, the Malayan Emergency did not see the use of strategic deception.

Psychological Operations & Public Affairs

British High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney, increased the emphasis on PSYOP, just as the PSYWAR division became operational in September of 1948. The original configuration of the PSYWAR Department was primarily military, with most of the personnel's experience gained during World War II. Malaya was a fundamentally different type of confrontation.

Relying on past experience, the PSYWAR division approached the Malayan Emergency from a rather traditional perspective, and guidance from the High Commissioner further diluted the effectiveness of PSYWAR. Responding to criticism from the commercial planters, following the killing of three planters by the insurgents, the primary PSYOP theme became revenge. This resulted in a campaign which threatened not only the insurgents, but the local populace who helped them, even if such help was against the locals' will.

During this period, the new newspaper sponsored by the PSYWAR division attempted to win over the population supporting the insurgents through several means. Named *Sin Lu Pao* (*New Path News*), the new PSYOP sponsored paper reflected several collisions between policy, PSYOP and Public Affairs. For example, the *New Path News*, while mocking the MCP, simultaneously reported several policy decisions that caused more damage than good. Directives allowed the High Commissioner to deport anyone who was not a federal citizen or born in Malaya, which turned out to be the majority of the Chinese squatter population. Other regulations gave the High Commissioner the right to detain anyone suspected of collaborating with the insurgents, confine them without trial, and relocate or banish families to mainland China. The regulations had an inherent flaw in that they did not discriminate between those who willingly helped, and those forced to aid the insurgents. The combination of rapid implementation and lack of discrimination of these new regulations quickly created distrust and suspicion.

Civil Military Operations

After the initial outbreak of hostilities, one of the first items identified by both the military and the police was inadequate knowledge of the civilian population they were attempting to influence and defend. Significant changes in the population demographics, location and infrastructure occurred during the Japanese occupation. Simply put, the British government was missing key information about the Malayan population, its makeup, and location that the registration process could provide. The key points included:

- Accurate numbers of the population and their ethnicity.
- Location and distribution of the population.
- Location of Chinese squatters and contested land.
- Food and water sources surveyed
- Update infrastructure knowledge. What services (electricity, water, medical, schools, etc.) were available, where and to whom?

As this process began, the MCP realized that registration would ease identification of insurgents. It would also create two additional negative effects for the insurgency. This was the first time many people had ever seen government representatives. Registration became the first step in establishing a government presence and started to dispel the perception of a distant and uncaring administration. Second, the registration served an intelligence function by determining population, food, and resource distribution throughout Malaya while also facilitating the creating or updating of administration maps.

Registration was the first step in re-establishing British presence in many remote parts of Malaya. While not permanent, the registration teams were the first government presence that many of the rural Malay villages had ever seen.

The British determined the MCP was dependent upon the Min Yuen (Chinese squatters) for logistics and resupply. Information gathered during the registration process indicated that if the plan did not include transferring-deeded land to the former squatters, the probability of success would be virtually zero. Second, the registration process drove home to the British administration the fact that most of the Chinese squatters were illegally occupying their land. Third, it would reestablish British control over the outlying areas and undermine the unofficial MCP government. Finally, successful relocation would allow the British administration to sever the insurgents and their supply lines. Two unforeseen effects of the registration were valuable insight into the popular points of the MCP platform and a better understanding of the area of operations and its geographic constraints.

The Briggs Plan

The appointment of Sir Harold Briggs marked the beginning of a significant change in the way that Britain prosecuted the Malayan Emergency. Briggs was the first person to fill the new Director of Operations role. His new position made him responsible for coordinating civil, police, military, naval and air forces. For the first time, these capabilities were under the control of a single person. Any service questioning a Briggs' decision could appeal to the High Commissioner. Upon unifying the military and civilian police under his authority, Briggs next remodeled the War Executive Committees. Their authority flowed from federal to state to district, and finally the settlement level. Policy review occurred at a local level, and results then flowed from the settlement back to the federal. These committees met weekly and melded civil, police and military actions into a cohesive whole across horizontal governmental levels, while coordinating national policy vertically from the federal down to the settlement level. Another critical aspect is that each committee had discretionary powers limited to its level. For example, a district committee could review and release a leaflet, if within federally determined parameters, across the district. The Committee structure allowed tailoring of national policy, actions, and messages for delivery across state, district and settlement lines. This resulted in messages aimed at groups, ethnicities, and small settlements

so that individuals could easily discern their place and role in the overall policy.

MILDEC and OPSEC

Early experiments had shown that using paratroops allowed a high degree of mobility, but that the insurgents were now watching the few clearings in the jungle where the paratroops could land. Thus, the insurgents were still able to get advance warning of paratroop arrival into their particular region of the jungle. MILDEC changed this in 1950. First, the British SAS developed a unique tree jumping harness that allowed paratroopers to insert through the jungle canopy. This usage permitted the paratroops to remain suspended in the canopy until after dark, when they would lower themselves to the ground. During the initial phase of this operation, parachute insertion using the special harness, and normal parachute missions into clearings, started to produce results. After designing a preliminary deception campaign, the *New Path News* published that the typical patrol lasted roughly two weeks. In reality, the patrols lasted a minimum of 100 days. In some cases, to support the two-week perception, some paratroops would link up with the patrols and the same number of troops that began the patrol would return within two weeks. To aid this perception, the paratroops used the same uniforms worn by the regular soldiers. In the meantime, the remaining personnel from the patrol and paratroops would continue deeper into the jungle to complete the 100 day mission. This deception resulted in the MCP consistently underestimating the number of patrols actively operating in the jungle at any one time.

PSYOP and PA

In 1950, Director of Emergency Information Hugh Carleton-Greene received permission to institute a radical new information campaign. He concluded the current policies offered little incentive to the Chinese squatters to defect or collaborate and, conversely, served as an incentive for the insurgents to fight to the death. Instead, Carleton-Greene proposed rewards for surrender policy, offering the first substantive shift in Malayan PSYWAR policy from the previous revenge theme. Briggs overrode police objections after Malay leaders convinced him of the potential of the surrender program's rewards.

To take advantage of this change in policy and to make the marriage of PSYWAR and PA more effective, Carleton-Greene changed the objectives of the PSYWAR section. Working

closely with local political leaders and captured insurgents, they developed a new set of objectives to replace the previous revenge theme. New objectives included:

- Create distrust and suspicion between leaders and led by stressing gulf between the advantages and benefits enjoyed by MCP elite.
- Create doubt in ultimate victory by quoting from captured documents in which senior party members expressed uncertainty.
- Counter propaganda that those who surrendered would be ill-treated or killed when their usefulness ended.
- Promote dissension within units by stressing differences of treatment accorded to various ethnic, religious, or racial classes.

To further open communications with rebels and the Chinese squatters, Carleton-Greene increased the number of channels available for distributing information, adding ground loudspeakers, plays and personal appearances by surrendered enemy personnel (SEP). However, surrendered personnel indicated that the leaflet remained the best means to communicate with rebels. In fact, the MCP declared that possession of a British leaflet (by an MCP member) as reasonable justification for execution.

Carleton-Greene also introduced a full broadcast schedule in Malay, Tamil, and four dialects of Chinese, replacing the English and Malay only broadcasts. The new programming combined the vernacular press and translated broadcasts to become the principal means of communicating with the

uncommitted people of the country. Working closely with Carleton-Greene, the PSYWAR and Emergency Information Services, Radio Malaya focused upon explaining three specific themes: the importance of registration; how the resettlement would occur; and countering the growing Malay perception that the Chinese were shown favoritism in infrastructure construction. PA worked with Civil Military Operations and PSYWAR to ensure that the following five objectives in policy and actions matched. This ensured synchronization of message, policy, and actions across the settlement, district, state, and federal levels of Malaya.

CMO

Upon reviewing registration and resettlement data, Briggs laid out a sweeping plan for food and drug control, aimed at breaking the logistic links between the jungle-based insurgents and their Min Yuen support. The key to making the food and drug denial work was the resettlement plan begun in 1948.



British Army firebase in Malaya, circa 1956. (MOD UK)

To ensure the success of the program, High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney received approval to give state and settlement authorities the power to declare areas as controlled areas. The main purpose was to concentrate the population, in part, to provide a means of protecting the population from the insurgents while simultaneously cutting communications and support to the insurgents. To entice the Chinese to relocate to the new villages, villagers received a stipend while they waited for their first crop, one sixth of an acre for a home, and a minimum amount of deeded land for planting. By combining land ownership and security with access to medical facilities, water, electricity, and schooling in each village, the CMO effectively removed several key MCP justifications.

Turning The Tide

In early February 1952, Lt Gen Gerald Templar replaced Briggs. After reviewing the situation in Malaya and talking with Briggs, Templar concluded, much as Briggs did, that this was primarily a political campaign. In September 1952, he created a new policy that offered citizenship to over half the ethnic Indians and Chinese. Templar then followed this success with new legislation proposing an electoral process for state legislative councils elected from the newly established village councils. Though his actions did not effectively change Briggs' plan, one of Templar's major innovations was to create a single director of intelligence who oversaw the civilian, military and police intelligence functions. What made this new position unique was that the Director of Intelligence was primarily responsible for analysis and had little to do with actual collection. This division of responsibility let the collectors focus on collection, with all questions and requests for analysis routed to the new Director of Intelligence. The analysts were now responsible for analyzing data and producing estimates. This let the military and police focus on gathering intelligence versus answering questions from on high.

EW and MILDEC

During 1953, the MCP introduced a new type of radio for communications amongst senior MCP officials. However, the new radio allowed a much more accurate triangulation than was possible before. In fact, the triangulation was accurate enough that it could successfully guide RAF heavy bombers. To prevent civilian casualties, the Special Police would verify that the MCP camp was not holding captive civilians and would smuggle homing beacons into the camps. The British took this new EW technique one-step further. They activated a MILDEC plan focused on the MCP leadership. The objective was to convince the MCP leadership that the British were getting their information from high-level members of the MCP. Through information obtained from surrendered enemy personnel, the British leaked that certain high-ranking members of the MCP had left the camps just prior to the RAF strikes. In the end, the MCP did not figure out the EW methodology being used and instead executed 11 mid level officials for leaking information to the British.

PSYOP

PSYOP began to emphasize the decline of the MCP with government films featuring a combination of well-known surrendered insurgents and those from the local area of the village. Another PSYOP program rotated the better-known insurgents through the contested areas to prove to the people that they were alive and well, in keeping with the government promise. Subtle points to the photos and visits included clothing, obvious weight gain, the simple fact they were alive, and doing well under the British.

The PSYOP campaign was also working on the MCP, and as mentioned above, the combination of air strikes and MILDEC allowed for the creation of further dissension within the MCP ranks. At the same time, the PSYOP section began to capitalize further upon the rewards-for-surrender program. Another refinement was in the primary PSYOP message themes:

- a. Where did the money go?
- b. Why work against the interests of the masses?
- c. It is dangerous to carry a pistol or a carbine.
- d. One of your comrades has been killed in this area?
- e. Do you need medical assistance?"

Theme "d" was quite interesting in that, not only would the PSYOP section announce who had been killed by the government during operations, but would also include who had been executed for possessing, reading or doing something the MCP found offensive. As these were standardized procedures—as Briggs envisioned them—the tailored leaflets differed across districts. This particular theme was the single most effective leaflet in the message inventory, designed to induce the surrender of individual insurgents.

CMO

In a refinement of the Briggs plan on food denial, Templar decided that the security forces should focus their efforts on the guerilla supply parties operating near the jungle fringe to force the insurgents to commit resources to defending their supply organizations. A secondary effect was to force the MCP to divert additional resources to producing the necessary food. Che The, the MCP senior official countered with an aphorism "the guerillas moves among the people like a fish swims through the ocean." Templar pointed out that food denial and civil programs "would create shallows where the fish could be found easily."

The next phase was the creation of white areas and black areas. By 1953, in some areas designated as white areas, insurgent activity had practically ceased: residents were not subject to emergency restrictions or regulations. In comparison, black areas continued to enforce all the regulations and restrictions. In fact, the definition of what constituted a white area closely agrees with what Mao would define as a base area. The establishment of white areas delivered yet another blow to the insurgent campaign, which had yet to establish a secure

base area. Contrast this insurgent failure with the government which actively advertised its success in doing exactly what the insurgents had been attempting to do for the last 4 years.

PA

Public affairs had a challenging role of keeping the population informed of what was going on and why the selected measures were necessary. The food denial programs and the resultant restrictions programs provided a legitimate means for villagers to refuse food to the insurgents. PA also disseminated the village requirements for designation as a white area to the local populace.

Continuing distribution of radios and openness shown by the British government created two developments that PA had to counter. The first created a new tactic for the MCP. In mid-1952, the MCP shifted their tactics from the adults in the villages to the Chinese students in the middle schools. The ramifications of this shift in policy did not become apparent until 1954 when the students began to attack pro-government educators. The second development was the government plan to begin educating the populace that a unified government which represented all, was better than one based upon a single dominant ethnicity. Templar forced alliances between the various Malay factions to further the single unified government. At the same time, debate and discussions featuring panels of respected local academics debated the issues using the radio as a means for the entire nation to participate.

Mopping Up (1954-1960)

In 1954, General Sir Geoffrey Bourne replaced Templar and remained the senior British official until Malaya became independent on 31 August 1957. The final military push from the MCP came on an unexpected front, in the schools of Malaya. The execution of several senior administrators of Chinese High Schools in 1954 alerted the British Administration to the new MCP front. During 1954-1956, the British administration discovered several large MCP cells in different, large, mostly Chinese high schools across Malaya. To counter this, Bourne and his Malayan successors, used a variety of programs to combat the MCP incursion into the high schools.

PSYOP

The concept of a peace offensive, developed by Templar's administration, became the new overall theme behind the PSYOP program. As insurgent numbers decreased, the focus shifted from groups to individuals. Group photos further emphasized the surrendered insurgents peaceful coexistence with the government, years after laying down their arms.

For the insurgents who did not cooperate, the government resorted to other means. First, forces would surround an insurgent area. Then, the government offered insurgents the opportunity to surrender. Message delivery was through assorted means such as radio, voice, speaker aircraft, leaflet, and contact with villagers. The troops would then withdraw for a period of three days. At the end of three days, the troops

moved back into the area and killed all remaining insurgents. If captured, insurgents went to prison on extended sentences.

CMO

By 1954, the relocation program approached completion. Over thirty percent of the villages provided their own protection. In some areas, village guards were down to standby status as the size of white areas increased. The increase in white areas allowed Bourne to begin another step, which was the establishment of a common educational system across Malaya. Bourne created school management committees using locally elected parents and school administrators to enforce common standards. This was the final unifying step taken by the British for the sole purpose of breaking down ethnic barriers.

Lessons From Malaya

Briggs recognized the insurgency he was facing in Malaya differed significantly from World War II, though both this and the Malayan Emergency centered on clashing belief systems. However, the means to success were diametrically opposite. In the case of WWII, defeating the axis governments resulted in the defeat of the nation. This is markedly different from the Malayan Emergency where two parties were fighting to become the Malayan population's choice for governance. This conceptual difference was the underlying reason for Briggs' earlier comment that the Malayan Emergency was primarily a political campaign.

Message

Malaya demonstrated the ability of a ruling government to deliver a coherent message, seamlessly coordinated through words and policy, is critical to a successful counterinsurgency. The message that the British delivered to the Malayan populace was simply, "the government is your friend." This ability to connect with the Malayan people was the result of vertical and horizontal coordination across the Malayan government structures. The ability to meld civil, military and police policies and actions transmitted a message heard loud and clear by the Malayan population. The MCP's inability to offer a better or at least equal message resulted in their eventual downfall.

PA

PA was a key message channel during the Malayan Emergency. PA's role was critical and evolved as the conflict progressed. In the initial phase, it explained government reasoning behind the registration and relocation of the populace. PA was able to explain why both government programs were beneficial to the local population. Later, in conjunction with Radio Malaya, PA conveyed accurate news about important local issues to the Malayan population. In that regard, providing access to news and a simple radio served as a means of driving another wedge between the insurgents and their supporting population base. Carleton-Greene let the radios receive Radio Malaya and Radio Peking. This deliberate action allowed

the population to listen to both sides of the argument and make an educated choice about which side to support.

Decentralized Planning

One of the primary lessons of the Malayan Emergency was the value of decentralized planning. One of the problems the British administrations faced was synchronizing the message across nine states which had populations composed of Chinese, Malay, and Indian, along with a religious mix of Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. Timeliness and relevance were important considerations as well. The ability to tailor a message for a region down to a settlement level was critical in the overall success. Early in the conflict, Hugh Carleton-Greene realized that centralizing this process would create unacceptable delays, negating any advantage that PSYOP could create. Fortunately, Lt Gen Briggs recognized this same issue. This was one reason for the creation of the district warfare executive and settlement warfare executive committees for coordinating government policies and actions vertically (from federal down to settlement) and horizontally (across police, civil and military). Working closely together, Briggs and Carleton-Greene created guidelines that allowed the lower levels to create and distribute PSYOP leaflets faster than the MCP. By the end of the conflict, insurgents discovered the government had better knowledge of their losses than their own leadership.

Such decentralized planning was key in being able to focus PSYWAR efforts on individuals versus a movement. In the end, this decentralization allowed the government to react faster than the MCP, creating the perception of a force that would eventually win out over the insurgents.

Joint IO Doctrine Viewed Through Malayan Experience

Generally, doctrine is the synthetic product of actual experience in previous conflicts. When reviewing the majority of Joint Doctrine, it became clear the services self-concepts determine not only how they prepare for war, but how flexible they will be in responding to unexpected situations. The majority of Joint Doctrine is based on large-scale conflict, and thus the United States Armed Forces are organized on the same basis. This can be seen in the types and variety of documents that relate directly to large-scale conflict, including: fire support, forcible entry, space, air mobility, laser designation, amphibious assault, amphibious embarkation, and suppression of enemy air defenses. Yet only two newer documents, *Foreign Internal Defense* (JP 3-07.1 in 2004) and *Urban Operations* (JP 3-06 in 2002), relate directly to insurgency.

Insurgency

Insurgency as we know it today is neither a new phenomenon nor a recent one. Once classified as rebellions or revolutions,



Fighting the MCP. (MOD UK)

insurgencies have long existed in the past. During the twentieth century, the United States has been involved in multiple counterinsurgency efforts. The Hukbalahap rebellion in the Philippines, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq show recent US counterinsurgency involvement. Based on lessons from the Malayan emergency, the British treat insurgency as a different form of war. Counterinsurgency techniques and methodology are fundamentally different from conventional conflict. Based simply upon frequent US involvement, one could expect that US doctrine would address counterinsurgency.

In reviewing the joint publications, insurgency and counterinsurgency are both mentioned, primarily in our *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (JP 3.0), *Military Operations Other Than War* (JP 3-07) and *Procedures for Foreign Internal Defense* (JP 3-07.1). Of all the joint doctrine for operations, the one for Foreign Internal Defense mentions “insurgency” 82 times. If all the insurgency references in the doctrine documents examined by this article are combined, the three JP’s (JP 3.0, 3-07 and 3-07.1) count for 82.6% of the references. This means that for the remaining nine documents, “insurgency” is mentioned roughly once every 90 pages (23 refs over 1998 pages). Granted this is not critical if the term is relevant in context.

The Malayan Emergency demonstrated the importance of a tightly integrated and clearly defined IO campaign within a counterinsurgency. However, the current IO doctrine creates the opposite effect, particularly in how IO is organized. There are currently three doctrinal templates in existence for the services to use. The first and oldest is JP 3-13.1 *Command and Control Warfare*, and the second edition of JP 3-13 *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*, which finally became official on 13 February 2006, after a protracted review process.

The IO documents are particularly relevant in terms of their role within counterinsurgency. As a key means of influencing a target population, these documents as a group do not distinguish between major conflict and insurgency. In some cases, their guidance is simply wrong. For example, Figure 4 is common to JP 3.0 *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, JP 3-13.1 *Command and Control Warfare*, and JP 3-57 *Civil Military Operations*. What is interesting is that Figure 3 lists counterinsurgency as a non-combat mission. Current losses of US troops in Iraq highlight the falsity of this perception.

Using the Iraq example, JP 3-0 later states the US military does not usually engage in counterinsurgency. This assertion flies in direct contrast to the US military’s experience in Vietnam, and the ongoing situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. All three primary publications specify the military will support insurgencies or support counterinsurgency as directed by our government. In that regard, some of the newer documents such as JP 3-58 and JP 3-07.1 are starting to show improvement.

IO and insurgency doctrine documents as a whole suffer from two problems. First, there is no service lead established

for the insurgency mission, which means that there is no advocate to fight for funding and resources to support this area. Notably, we have a service lead for specialized operations such as embarking troops for an amphibious assault, yet counterinsurgency is lumped with unconventional warfare under Army. Second, lack of guidance lets the services determine internal resources for this mission. For example, the Marine Corps formalized counterinsurgency in MCWP 33.5. Third, the Army has not clearly established its role as the lead service—though they are drafting new counterinsurgency guidance—while the Air Force and the Navy currently have no counterinsurgency doctrine at all.

However, considering the frequency of US involvement in insurgency or counterinsurgency, it makes sense, that someone should be in charge of coordinating COIN resources. One service should be in charge and define the other services' supporting responsibilities.

Message

The most important lesson from the Emergency remains relevant today: the importance of being “propaganda minded.” All personnel involved in the campaign, from government officials, police to soldiers—especially at the grassroots level—must provide the same message: “the government is your friend.” The US ability to transmit a similar message is critical. The prerequisites to do this do not exist in US doctrine for three reasons: artificial constraints, local involvement and decentralized planning.

The British concept of PSYWAR was markedly different from the US version of PSYOP. The UK brought in a Military Deception specialist named Hugh Carleton-Greene. Shortly after his arrival, he assumed overall command of the British PSYWAR operation for PSYOP and PA. Carleton-Greene effectively became the coordinator for *all* messages developed and disseminated through PA and PSYOP methodologies, which allowed the British to create and disseminate a cohesive message in a timely manner.

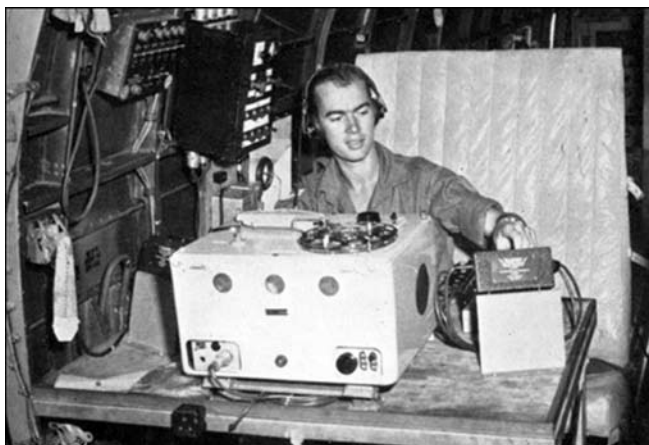
US doctrine states PA and PSYOP will coordinate to make sure those messages will not conflict. The artificial constraints begin with JP 3-61, stating PA personnel will not be involved in PSYOP activities, and PSYOP personnel cannot talk to media unless it concerns a PSYOP program. In Malaya, PSYOP messages were disseminated using radio, newspapers, and leaflets. However, US doctrine prohibits contact with traditional media (newspaper, radio, etc.) by PSYOP personnel. Notably, in 1952 Hugh Carleton-Greene published an article in the *New York Times* titled “In Malaya the

Front is Everywhere.” The article identified Carleton-Greene as former head of Information Services, when at the time of the article he was Chief, PSYWAR Division. If Malaya had been a US operation and Carleton-Greene a US citizen, he would not have had access to any press.

Another artificial constraint is the decision process that removes authority for PSYOP and concentrates it in Washington DC further complicating the situation. A second key point is that British media access focuses upon supporting the commander; yet JP 3-53 specifically states that the primary purpose is to “expedite the flow of accurate and timely information about the activities of US joint forces to the public and internal audience.” Unfortunately, these distinctions place an artificial constraint upon US operations in developing and disseminating a synchronized message. An example of this was the uproar in 2006 after the US placed positive news articles in the Iraqi press. American media claimed this was an example of the US compromising free press in Iraq.

The involvement of local personnel was critical in the eventual success of the Malayan Emergency. Local involvement ranged from designing programs and leaflets to garnering political support for the embattled administration. This is

particularly problematic in terms of PSYOP, which relies upon US planners designing and creating appropriate messages. Unlike the British, US methodologies are somewhat more limited. Recent articles in the *Washington Post*, *NY Times* and on CNN reported on the Department of Defense's unwillingness to use local personnel due to security clearance issues. This is in direct contradiction to the methodologies employed by the British in Malaya.



Airborne PSYOP in Malaya. (PSYWAR.org)

Decentralized Planning

The key British decisions to create a single position for all government coordination, and to decentralize, contrast with current US policy, basic organization and the PSYOP coordination process.

To begin with, American policy does not adequately capture the lesson of a single person responsible for civil and military integration. Today, a State Department official can be responsible for civil and military matters. However, when a Joint Force Commander (JFC) is responsible, this same relationship does not exist. Joint Pub 3-08, which rightly advocates the use of different executive branches in the performance of the job also states the military must build consensus, and that the goals of an institution may conflict with the private, usually short term, agendas of its members. It then goes on to state that the key to success in interagency

cooperation is to achieve consensus in the Department of Defense before entering the interagency process. Again, the Malayan Emergency was managed from within theater. The US process does not reflect this lesson.

In essence, American policy creates unnecessary time delays by having another staff build consensus outside the theater of operations, without a senior decision maker. The problem in most group dynamics is that decisions can be over analyzed or diluted. Theoretically, the theater experts are not located in Washington DC—home of the interagency process—but rather in theater. This does not discount some experts that work in various agencies, but the majority of such experts with contemporary knowledge reside in-theater.

The second major problem is that of organization. The British were able to combine all civil and military functions under a single senior administrator. The US does not possess a similar ability as the actual problem is external to the DOD. This highlights a major lesson from Malaya not incorporated into our current doctrine: military and civilian departments maintain separate chains of command that do not merge until they reach the US President. Briggs' reorganization was a means to alleviate this specific problem. Unfortunately, this problem is larger than the US military, so in the meantime this design compromises the ability to push decisions down to theater level. Briggs was able to decentralize planning, and American policy does not capture the first step in that process, that of a single decision maker in theater.

The final example concerns the development of PSYOP themes and messages. By 1952, four years into the emergency, PSYWAR officers at the district and settlement level had five themes available for execution. So long as the settlement PSYWAR officers stayed within the approved PSYWAR template, federal approval was not required prior to production and dissemination. This framework also directs rapid implementation of messages and themes at the highest (federal and state) levels without interfering with the local campaign.

This contrasts with US IO doctrine. Joint Pub 3-07.1 has a section which calls for working with the local authorities and representatives, but does not provide the same degree of leeway that the British used to achieve success in Malaya. While the document actually mentions "local" sixty-two times, it still requires most actions to be coordinated for approval through the senior staff and provides very little guidance for simplifying the chain of command. The result is that while the document recommends tailoring the mission to meet local needs, central management of all coordination is mandatory.

Unfortunately, the DOD places even tighter controls on the development of PSYOP messages than it does on kinetic capabilities in theater. In fact, JP 3-53 specifically states, "The Secretary of Defense normally delegates PSYOP product approval to the supported combatant commander. This does not mean that the supported combatant commander also has been delegated approval for PSYOP product dissemination."

This is an important distinction, which means that Joint Force Commander cannot distribute leaflets in his/her theater of operations. In fact, based on this doctrine, the highly successful

British campaign would never have worked, as only the Joint Force Commander can approve products (when delegated). However, the joint force commander cannot approve themes, objectives, or dissemination of the product in his own theater. This becomes particularly troublesome as the ability to decide what will work in theater becomes resident not with the staff working in theater, but rather in the Secretary of Defense's staff in Washington, DC. Contrasting this with process applied in Malaya, theater staff made all PSYOP decisions with downward delegation to locales for material production and dissemination. The American policy of centralizing guidance also increases the time necessary to create, produce and disseminate a PSYOP message. This is in direct contrast to principle six of the PSYOP methodology, which states that timeliness is critical.

Technology

One of the key lessons of the Malayan Emergency was that technology advantages were almost superfluous. In almost every category, the British and government of Malaya had technological superiority over the insurgents. In fact, the MCP's dependence upon a courier system rendered Britain's sophisticated COMINT technology irrelevant. At the same time, the jungle limited access to both aircraft and vehicles. Used for strategic, operational and tactical mobility, aircraft and motor vehicles could not achieve their designed impact. Instead, Britain relied on patrols, which essentially negated advanced technologies in a leveling effect between the insurgents and British forces. Technology cannot counter informal social networks. Unfortunately, as John Nagl points out, a "basic tenet of American military doctrine is the concept of massive firepower/technology."

Placed in context, Malayan lessons would indicate a connection between the lack of British success in using advanced technology and insurgency. Current lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan are showing that insurgents are able to adapt commercially available technology to their needs. In Iraq today, computers, key chains, garage door openers and cell phones represent several examples of non-traditional technologies being adapted for insurgent uses. Yet there is no JP that provides any direction on how to counter the integration of technology in a counterinsurgency. Worse, the basic lesson that American technology might be ineffective is lost.

Recommendations

First, our doctrine must recognize insurgency as a combat operation. The problem with insurgency is that our current doctrine ignores the lessons learned from Malaya and now Iraq. Our new doctrine should not be part of the JP 3-07 series on major operations other than war. Rather, it should be a stand-alone document that designates a single service as the lead for the counterinsurgency mission. The US Air Force and Navy have a role, but are not appropriate for developing counterinsurgency doctrine. The Army, according to John Nagl, has systematically dismissed insurgency when not engaged in an active insurgent conflict. As the United States Marine Corps

has shown interest in counterinsurgency, one recommendation would be to designate the USMC as the lead service in the counterinsurgency mission. This would include making the USMC the service lead for organizing and equipping forces for insurgencies. (*Editor's Note: Army Field Manual/Fleet Marine Force Manual 3-42, Counterinsurgency, incorporating a considerable number of lessons learned from Malaya, was finally published on 15 Dec 2006.*)

This message problem is partially within the scope of DOD doctrine to change. Current US law prohibits the use of PSYOP messages upon the American populace. However, the concept of using traditional media to convey either PSYOP or deception messages would create a fire storm within the US media community. The World War II D-Day methodology used the media as unwitting participants, in that they reported what they were given. The issue centers around whether PA will pass misleading information to the media. Unfortunately, JP 3-61 seems to imply that some type of agreement needs to be in place with civilian media before removing any artificial constraints. This becomes important as modern communications technology continues reduce the traditional difference between theater and domestic audiences. Without resolution to the question of access to foreign media for counterinsurgency messages, US PSYOP will remain effectively shackled, and incapable of creating British-styled successes.


In terms of decentralized planning, and specifically in terms of PSYOP, this paper recommends that the theater commander have the ability both to develop themes in advance, for approval, and to disseminate these themes through the appropriate mediums in theater. This authority would also include the ability to push pre-approved themes and products to lower levels for faster implementation than our current models.

Similarly, the purpose of a country team, when working with the US ambassador, is to provide contact with and decision-making authority in country to respond to the crisis du jour. Peace and conflict, not war, are the situations where country teams normally exist. Based upon the Malayan Emergency, the US military needs that similar capabilities and authorities for counterinsurgency. However, if a country team is in place when the US declares war or places a JFC in charge, those teams lose their decision authority. Decision authority reverts to Washington versus theater. Instead, this paper recommends that a country team provide the same capabilities to the Joint Force Commander or an ambassador. Appropriate policy decisions would remain in Washington, but execution should remain under the direction of either the JFC or ambassador, supported by appropriate staffs. A common country team would also simplify transition to a more peaceful situation managed by an ambassador. It would eliminate many duplicative staff actions attempting to achieve consensus on issues on the opposite sides of the world.

Conclusions

Have we incorporated those lessons learned by the British Government and the Government of Malaya during the Malayan Emergency into our doctrinal guidance? At most, the American armed forces have learned the lessons that they wanted to learn. Critical terms like insurgency and downward delegation are in the doctrine, but the organizations retain a highly centralized management style, which diametrically opposes the lessons of Malaya. Insurgency is not a distinct form of war according to US doctrine, and the same doctrine shows it does not involve combat. The evening news from Iraq (or in the past, Vietnam) highlights the inadequacy of our current definition for insurgency.

Critical capabilities like PA and PSYOP are shackled by bureaucratic restraint and artificial limitations. In the battle of minds, the US has organized to fail by limiting its ability to integrate civilian and military capabilities effectively. Organizational limitations hamper US efforts in winning any conflict that sheer force of arms cannot handle. At a minimum, looking to Washington DC for every PSYOP and PA decision will so increase our decision cycle timeline as to make it completely ineffective, regardless of the decision rendered. Furthermore, the knowledge necessary for effective and efficient decisions is located in theater.

Our actions show how little experience our guidance actually captures. This should be doubly frightening given the accelerating pace of insurgencies in the world today. 

Please see the bibliography/references for this article on the IO Sphere Home Page at: <https://www.jiowc.osis.gov/Publications/IOSphere/index.cfm>

Click on the "updates" link under the Spring 2007 issue